New Documentary Reveals How Jan. 6 Has Changed America

WASHINGTON—As the third anniversary of the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol breach rolls around, The Epoch Times is set to release a documentary exploring the federal government's reaction in the days, months, and years afterward.

In The Epoch Times' first documentary on the subject, released in 2022, "The Real Story of January 6," senior investigative journalist Joe Hanneman explored the events of Jan. 6, 2021, uncovering stories surrounding the deaths of Rosanne Boyland and Ashli Babbitt, who were among the only direct casualties that day.

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Now, in a follow-up to be released on the third anniversary of the event, Mr. Hanneman and director Fiona Young explore how federal law enforcement responded to the events.

While the first installment focused on the hidden stories of Jan. 6, 2021, the follow-up takes a "more behind-the-scenes look at some of the impacts on families that took place as a result of charges brought against family members," Mr. Hanneman told The Epoch Times.

The Jan. 6 event was one whose scope, causes, and long-range effects remain deeply divisive.

Many Republicans say it was at most a riot, blown out of proportion by the federal government and its mainstream media allies.

Democrats say the event constituted an "insurrection" against the U.S. government, alleging that much of the responsibility lies with former President Donald Trump and his allies.

'2-Tiered Justice'

The Department of Justice's (DOJ's) response to Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol breach constituted the largest manhunt in U.S. history, capturing many American families in its crosshairs.

More than 1,200 people have been arrested and charged in connection to their actions that day. And the massive manhunt "shows no sign of slowing down," Mr. Hanneman said, with new

arrests continuing to make headlines.

Mr. Hanneman said that after he investigated the DOJ and FBI response, it became clear to him that the Jan. 6 participants and their families are victims of the "weaponization of the federal government."

A screenshot from the documentary 'The Real Story of January 6 Part 2: The Long Road Home.'

"The story I'm telling is one of two-tiered justice in America," Mr. Hanneman says in the opening of the documentary. "An open wound that runs far deeper than we realized."

The documentary reveals that even as many Americans have forgotten and moved past the events of the day, its aftermath remains a daily burden for many.

In its mad dash to identify and arrest all who entered the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, the FBI diverted from standard operating procedure, the documentary reveals. The agency moved resources away from matters such as child exploitation and violent crime to focus on the roundup of Jan. 6 suspects.

Entire families suffered SWAT raids on their homes. Some have dealt with separation from their spouses, mothers, and fathers for years now. They lost their jobs and income. They suffered a barrage of death threats and hate mail.

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>
> *Joe Hanneman, senior investigative journalist*

(A screenshot from the documentary, "The Real Story of January 6 Part 2: The Long Road Home.")

A handful of FBI agents spoke out against this, feeling it would be a violation of their oath to the Constitution to continue cooperating. These agents faced swift retribution, losing their security clearance and their jobs for daring to refuse to march in lockstep with the agency to which they had devoted years of their lives.

The possible effects of this, Mr. Hanneman warned, is that we may have entered "an era of thought crimes"; an era during which participating in protests can be criminalized, and First Amendment rights disregarded.

"This is an issue that really everybody should be paying attention to," Mr. Hanneman said when asked why people should tune into the documentary. "Not just on the right, because

these kinds of tactics could just as quickly be turned around and used on people who are politically to the left, or libertarian. It’s really something that very quickly could be affecting a huge chunk of society.”

Here’s a preview of what to expect from the upcoming documentary.

‘Atypical’ SWAT Raids

A key witness in the documentary, former FBI special agent Stephen Friend, said that it became clear to him that the FBI was operating in an “atypical” manner regarding Jan. 6 suspects.

In August 2022, Mr. Friend learned that the FBI planned to use SWAT teams to execute arrest warrants against those suspected of having committed a crime at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

“I’m not a shrinking violet when it comes to using SWAT,” Mr. Friend said, noting his own experience as a SWAT operator.

But one subject whom the FBI had planned a SWAT raid against had been cooperative with the agency, voluntarily appearing for an interview and remaining in contact with the FBI.

“That to me was atypical,” Mr. Friend said.

Former FBI special agent Stephen Friend said working at the bureau was his “dream job.” (Photo courtesy of Stephen Friend)

John Strand was a recipient of one such “atypical” SWAT raid. Mr. Strand, a former actor and model, had his home barraged by an FBI SWAT team, who quickly trained laser sights on his chest and warned him to stand down.

Mr. Strand said that he was handcuffed and shackled at the ankles and that his home was searched for two hours.

Despite an impassioned defense from his attorney, Mr. Strand was found guilty, and he’s now serving a 32-month prison sentence.

Another family, the Munn family of Borger, Texas, was subjected to FBI SWAT raids on three different properties simultaneously.

Tom Munn and his wife, Dawn Munn, were arrested and taken from their home in separate vehicles; their teenage daughters were also taken from their homes, not even given a chance to change

their clothing.

“A number of times, we asked for warrants, but we were never issued that,” Ms. Munn said.

Mr. Friend said this use of SWAT is extreme.

“I’ve arrested over 150 violent criminals,” he said. “I never had to use SWAT. That really is the utmost, highest level of enforcement.”

Trump supporters clash with police and security forces as people try to enter the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021. (Brent Stirton/Getty Images)

The FBI didn’t respond to a request for comment on the agency’s standard parameters for deploying SWAT teams.

Garret O’Boyle, another former FBI agent turned whistleblower, noted other irregularities in the agency’s response to Jan. 6.

They’re pushing at this point to open as many of these investigations as you can, regardless of the legal ramifications that are at stake here.

Garrett O’Boyle, former agent, FBI

He said one case to which he was assigned was based on an anonymous tip—a basis that generally doesn’t hold much weight for law enforcement.

In that case, FBI scientists at Quantico relied on a 25-year-old photo to make a facial recognition match—another faux pas in law enforcement.

“They’re pushing at this point to open as many of these investigations as you can, regardless of the legal ramifications that are at stake here,” Mr. O’Boyle said.

Waukesha Police Department Officer Garret O’Boyle with daughter Gwen, in approximately 2017. (Photo courtesy of Garret O’Boyle)

After the Arrest

For those caught in the FBI’s broad net of arrests over Jan. 6, the nightmare had only just begun.

Many faced judgment in Washington, where more than 90 percent of the population—and thus, the jury pool—had voted for President Joe Biden.

Practically all the defendants attempted to have their cases moved from the federal district, where they felt their prospects of a fair trial were grim. And nearly every one of those petitions was denied.

Thus, many who participated in the protest have already been convicted of varying charges, with many facing more than two decades in prison.

Others have been left to languish in the District of Columbia Jail, dubbed the “gulag” by critics, facing harsh conditions and limited access to family, attorneys, and spiritual advisers and allegedly being deprived of many basic human necessities.

The District of Columbia Jail in Washington on Aug. 30, 2022. (Stefani Reynolds/AFP via Getty Images)

For those fortunate enough to not be in jail, consequences have still been pronounced.

The Munn family, raided by a SWAT team, faced reduced income prospects and backlash from their community.

“We lost about 70 percent of our income in that first year,” Ms. Munn said, noting the cancellation of contracts and other factors.

The family received hate mail and death threats. One Facebook post called for the family to be hanged from a tree as traitors.

The harassment got so severe, they said, that they've been forced to leave their longtime home in Borger.

Retaliation Against Whistleblowers

A handful of FBI agents, including Mr. Friend, Mr. O'Boyle, and former special agent Marcus Allen, took issue with the agency's handling of Jan. 6 cases.

When they voiced concerns, however, the retribution was swift and harsh.

Mr. O'Boyle said that once he became concerned with what he was seeing, he lodged protected disclosures to his chain of command.

The disclosures "fell on deaf ears," he said.

Eventually, Mr. O'Boyle was suspended. His family, in the midst of a move to Virginia for his FBI job, suddenly found themselves without income and forced to live in an RV.

His family's belongings, packed up by the FBI, were held by the agency without reason.

(L–R) Suspended FBI special agent Garret O'Boyle, former FBI agent Steve Friend, and suspended FBI agent Marcus Allen recite the Pledge of Allegiance during a hearing before the Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government on Capitol Hill in Washington on May 18, 2023. (Alex Wong/Getty Images)

Mr. Friend, too, spoke out against the atypical handling of Jan. 6 cases. He said that not long afterward, he was told his security clearance had been revoked, and he ultimately lost his job.

When the trio brought these concerns to the House Judiciary Committee, Democrats on the panel were quick to dismiss their testimony, noting the FBI's own interpretation. After an internal investigation, the FBI determined it had done nothing wrong and that the whistleblower disclosures were illegitimate.

Specifically, the FBI has said that the men were removed for legitimate reasons, including having participated in

unsanctioned interviews and peddled what the agency described as “conspiracy theories.”

The FBI didn’t reply to a further request for comment by press time.

Mr. Hanneman said that these and other findings presented in the documentary reveal “the need for a new January 6 committee,” dismissing the original Democrat-led Jan. 6 panel as “a propaganda effort.”

Mr. Hanneman said he hopes that the upcoming documentary screening before members of Congress will “light a fire” among members to pursue this route.

“The true service to the American people is to really fill this picture out,” he said.

The Epoch Times original documentary “The Real Story of January 6 Part 2: The Long Road Home” will be available to full subscribers starting Saturday, Jan. 6, at 8:30 p.m. ET on EpochTV.